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ABSTRACT

Search strategies and library reference materials are suggested for retrieving literature on general business topics, industries, and specific companies. Guidelines provided for each area include getting an overview through general sources, finding books and periodical and newspaper articles, and locating statistics. Reference materials listed include encyclopedias, indexes, and abstracts useful for business research. (RBF)

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INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO BUSINESS RESEARCH

by

Beth E. Dennett

IR010 041

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INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO BUSINESS RESEARCH

SELECTING A TOPIC

When you are writing a research paper in the field of business, your paper will probably be concerned with one of three areas: A GENERAL BUSINESS TOPIC, AN INDUSTRY, or A COMPANY.

If you decide to write a GENERAL BUSINESS TOPIC but are unsure which one, you might try browsing in the business section of a news magazine like Time or Newsweek or in a business periodical like Business Week, Forbes, Fortune, or Harvard Business Review for ideas. Recent issues of these periodicals are in Current Periodicals and Newspapers. Another avenue would be to skim through "What's New in Business Periodicals" found in a pamphlet box on Index Table 2. The table of contents page from some ninety business periodicals have been copied and stapled together thus forming a single issue of this publication. You might also check in the card catalog or in a business periodical index under subject headings of interest to you. Perhaps a title will spark an idea; also you will have some sense of the amount of material written on the subject.

If you are considering researching an INDUSTRY, you could select one in which you would like to pursue a career or one that is in the news. Another possibility would be to browse through the periodical Industry Week. You might also browse through U.S. Industrial Outlook (see p. 4) or Standard and Poor's Industry Surveys (see p. 4).

Perhaps you would like to research a COMPANY so that you will have acquired those investigative skills necessary to prepare for future job interviews. You might choose a firm you would like to work for or one that is in the news. Browsing through Everybody's Business : An Almanac (see p. 7) may prove enlightening as it describes the corporate personalities of large companies. A word of advice, doing research on a major, public corporation will be infinitely easier than choosing a private company. Because there is very little published information on private companies, library research quickly becomes a frustrating ordeal.

Whichever subject you decide to pursue, you will probably have to better define and narrow your original, general idea, as you are working under time constraints and within your professor's guideline regarding the paper's length and the number and type of references as well as the degree of subjectivity permitted.

Having decided on one of these three subject areas, turn to that section for further information. For a GENERAL BUSINESS TOPIC see page 2; an INDUSTRY, page 4; a COMPANY, page 6.

GENERAL BUSINESS TOPIC

GETTING AN OVERVIEW:

Before dashing to a periodical index or to the card catalog, it would be good to get an *overview* of your field of research. Such background material can be found in an encyclopedia article. This preliminary reading will familiarize you with key words, concepts, issues, and prominent persons in the field. It may also provide you with a historical perspective and indicate future developments. The encyclopedia article will aid you in still another way through its organization. If you are struggling with a topic which is too broad and unmanageable, you may decide to restrict your research to one of the subsections in the article.

Although general encyclopedias like Encyclopedia Americana or the New Encyclopaedia Britannica are fine sources of background material for most topics, you will want to begin by using a specialized encyclopedia. Because a specialized encyclopedia focuses on limited subject areas, its articles tend to be more detailed and comprehensive.

International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968. Ref. H40 .A2I5

This specialized encyclopedia concentrates on the social sciences. Articles include accounting, banking, economics, finance, industrial organization, management, marketing, and statistics. Articles are signed; short bibliographies are provided for further reading. Volume 17 is a detailed index to the entire set and should be used to locate all relevant articles. Volume 18 is a biographical supplement.

Specialized dictionaries are useful for a fuller understanding of terms and concepts. Detailed definitions from a specific discipline's perspective are provided. A sampling of those that can be found in the Reference Collection are listed below. For others, look in the card catalog under YOUR SUBJECT--DICTIONARIES or ask the reference librarian.

Computer Dictionary and Handbook. Ref. QA76.15 .S5 1980b
A Dictionary for Accountants. Ref. HF5621 .K6
Dictionary of Supervision and Management. Ref. HD19 .B33 1976
Encyclopedia of Banking and Finance. Ref. HG151 .M8 1973

FINDING BOOKS, PERIODICAL ARTICLES, AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:

Now you are ready to locate *books* on your topic. Books are a major source of information. If a book contains a bibliography, it can be used to find additional, pertinent material. Books on your topic can be located in the card catalog by checking under the appropriate subject heading. Look in Library of Congress Subject Headings, the two large red volumes in the card catalog area, to determine which subject headings are best for your topic. Should you desire further help, consult with either the card catalog assistant or reference librarian.

Periodical articles are valuable if you need current and concise information. Often they can be used to supplement book material. If you are dealing with a topic currently in the news, however, you may want to begin looking for articles and then try the card catalog for books which discuss the subject in more general terms.

Articles on your topic can be located by using a periodical index. In listing useful articles, be sure to include the periodical title, volume, pages, and date. Then you will have to determine whether U.C. Libraries has the periodicals you need.

Business Periodicals Index. (BPI). New York: H.W. Wilson, 1958-
Monthly except July, with periodic cumulations
Ref. Z7164 .C81B8 Index Table 2

This is the basic periodical index in the business field. Its subject coverage is broad. Approximately two hundred and seventy selected periodicals are indexed. Check under your subject.

The Business Index. Los Altos, California: Information Access Corporation, 1979-
The microfilm reader is on the table opposite the reference photocopiers.

Unlike Business Periodicals Index, this microfilm periodical/newspaper index provides abstracts or summaries for a number of articles. The abstract number appears at the end of the entry while the actual abstracts follow the alphabetical and numerical sections. It also indexes more periodicals than does BPI, but there is some duplication. Subject headings tend to be specific as there are many subheadings and related headings, so first look up your topic and then check under the various subheadings and cross references. Under a given subject heading the most recent references are listed first. Indexing is by subject as well as by author, brand name, and company name. At present this cumulative index only covers the period 1979 to date. Eventually five years will be cumulated on a single reel of microfilm.

Current information on your topic can also be found in *newspapers*. The leading daily newspaper from an American financial and business perspective is the Wall Street Journal. Articles on the topic of interest to you can be found through its separately published index.

Wall Street Journal Index. New York: Dow Jones and Company, 1958-
Monthly with annual cumulations
Ref. HG1 .W23 Index Table 2

This detailed index is divided into two parts. You will be interested in the second section, "General News" which indexes various topics and industries. The first section, "Corporate News" indexes company news. Entries contain a brief abstract. References are interpreted as follows: month, date, page, column. Ex. 1/2-7;3 is January 2, page 7, column 3.

LOCATING STATISTICS:

Sometimes *statistical data* is needed to support research. Although statistics can be located in a variety of reference sources, the most comprehensive source is Statistical Abstract of the United States.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Statistical Abstract of the United States. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1879-
Ref. HA202 .A1 Locked Case; Ask at the Reference Desk; Identification Required

This annual compendium of statistical data primarily for the United States is quite handy. Industrial, social, political, and economic statistics are provided, and the source from which the data was taken is cited. Most tables are national in scope; however, metropolitan, regional, and state statistics are included in a short section. The table of contents and a detailed index make finding the desired information relatively easy.

INDUSTRY

GETTING AN OVERVIEW:

If you are researching a particular industry, you will want to begin by getting an *overview* of that industry. Although you could use a general encyclopedia like Encyclopedia Americana or The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, two other sources are especially useful.

U.S. Department of Commerce. Industry and Trade Administration. U.S. Industrial Outlook. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office. (annual) Ref. HC106.5 .A265 1980
Locked Case; Ask at the Reference Desk; Identification Required

Standard and Poor's Corporation. Industry Surveys. New York: Standard and Poor's Corporation. Basic Analysis: annual, Current Analysis: quarterly
Industry and company indexes are in the front of volume 1.
Ref. HD2356 .U557
Locked Case; Ask at the Reference Desk; Identification Required

The U.S. Industrial Outlook will prove helpful in finding a brief description of the trends and outlook in more than two hundred industries. Industry Surveys, on the other hand, is a loose-leaf service which covers fewer industries but provides more lengthy analyses. In all probability, you will only want to thoroughly read portions of these industry articles. Skimming the rest and disregarding confusing statistical data will adequately serve your purpose

of acquiring general background information. Note: Because these materials are used heavily, please return them to the Reference Desk as soon as you have finished with them.

Specialized dictionaries are useful for a fuller understanding of terms and concepts. Detailed definitions from a specific discipline's perspective are provided. A sampling of those that can be found in the Reference Collection are listed below. For others, look in the card catalog under YOUR SUBJECT--DICTIONARIES or ask the reference librarian.

Encyclopedia of Banking and Finance. Ref. HG151 .M8 1973
The VNR Dictionary of Business and Finance. Ref. HF1001 .B7

FINDING BOOKS, PERIODICAL ARTICLES, AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:

In researching your industry you will not want to overlook the valuable resources of *books*, located through the card catalog. Sometimes books include a bibliography, a list of related readings which can be used to find additional material. When searching for books on your industry, look in Library of Congress Subject Headings, the two large red volumes in the card catalog area, to determine which subject headings are most appropriate. You may also consult with either the card catalog assistant or reference librarian for assistance.

Periodical articles are valuable for current and concise information. Often they can be used to supplement book material. If you are dealing with an industry currently in the news, however, you may want to begin looking for articles and then try the card catalog for books which discuss the industry more generally.

Articles on your industry can be located by using a periodical index. In listing useful articles, be sure to include the periodical title, volume, pages, and date. Then you will have to determine whether U.C. Libraries has the periodicals you need.

Business Periodicals Index. (BPI) New York: H.W. Wilson, 1958-
Monthly except July, with periodic cumulations
Ref. Z7164 .C81B8 Index Table 2

This is the basic periodical index in the business field. Its subject coverage is broad. Approximately two hundred and seventy selected periodicals are indexed. Check under the industry in which you are interested.

The Business Index. Los Altos, California: Information Access Corporation, 1979-
The microfilm reader is on the table opposite the reference photocopiers.

Unlike Business Periodicals Index, this microfilm periodical/newspaper index provides abstracts or summaries for a number of articles. The abstract number appears at the end of the entry while the actual abstracts follow the alphabetical and numeric sections. It also indexes more periodicals than does BPI, but there is some duplication. Subject headings tend to be specific as there are many subheadings and related

headings, so first look up your industry and then check under the various subheadings and cross references. Under a given subject heading, the most recent references are listed first. Indexing is by subject as well as by author, brand name, and company name. At present this cumulative index only covers the period 1979 to date. Eventually five years will be cumulated on a single reel of microfilm.

Current information on your industry can also be found in *newspapers*. The leading daily newspaper from an American financial and business perspective is the Wall Street Journal. Articles on your industry can be found through its separately published index.

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U.S. Bureau of the Census. Statistical Abstract of the United States. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1879-
Ref. HA202 .A1 Locked Case; Ask at the Reference Desk; Identification Required

This annual compendium of statistical data primarily for the United States is quite handy. Industrial, social, political, and economic statistics are provided, and the source from which the data was taken is cited. Most tables are national in scope; however, metropolitan, regional, and state statistics are included in a short section. The table of contents and a detailed index make finding the desired information relatively easy.

COMPANY

GETTING AN OVERVIEW:

If you are researching a company, you will want to begin by getting some background material or an *overview*. Instead of turning to an encyclopedia, you will need to use alternative reference sources.

Moskowitz, Milton; Katz, Michael; Levering, Robert, eds. Everybody's Business: An Almanac; the Irreverent Guide to Corporate America. New York: Harper and Row, 1980.
Ref. HD2785 .E88
Locked Case; Ask at the Reference Desk; Identification Required

This encyclopedic guide is much more than a compilation of mere facts, rather it describes the corporate personalities of more than three hundred large, well-known corporations. Company profiles are written in nontechnical, jargon-free English and include such information as sales and profits, rankings, what they do, history, reputation, what they own, who owns and runs the company, where they're going, stock performance, and consumer brands. Refer to the "Index of Companies Profiled" in the front to verify whether your company is included and on what page the profile begins.

Annual reports are an excellent source for detailed information on a company's operations as well as for current financial data. U.C. has a collection of more than two thousand annual reports of the largest companies across the United States and of local companies. Annual reports for the last five years are kept on most companies. Reports are alphabetically arranged in three vertical files in the Reference area.

If you have chosen a large, nationally-known company, you should have found ample information in the sources listed above. If you have not found any references to your company, you may want to change companies and research a major corporation. If you decide to proceed with your original choice, examine one or both of the sources listed below.

Moody's Investors Service. Industrial Manual. New York: Moody's Investors Service. Annual and semi-weekly supplements
Ref. HG4961 .M67 Index Table 1

Manuals for Bank and Finance, Municipal and Government, Over-the-Counter, Public Utilities, and Transportation are also on Index Table 1. Refer to the blue alphabetical index of companies in front of the appropriate volume.

Standard and Poor's Corporation. Standard Corporation Records. New York: Standard and Poor's Corporation. Loose-leaf with bimonthly supplements
Ref. HG4905 .S656 Index Table 1

Refer to the yellow index of companies in front of the appropriate volume. If the company is not listed, look in the blue index, "List of Subsidiary companies and Cross References."

Although much of the information presented in both investment services assumes some experience in interpreting financial data, you may find the description of the business and its products useful.

If you come across unfamiliar terms in your reading, you may want to consult a dictionary. Specialized dictionaries are useful for a fuller understanding of terms and concepts. Detailed definitions from a specific discipline's perspective are provided. A sampling of those that can be found in the Reference Collection are listed below. For others, look in the card catalog under YOUR SUBJECT—DICTIONARIES or ask the reference librarian.

Encyclopedia of Banking and Finance. Ref. HG151 .M8 1973
The VNR Dictionary of Business and Finance. Ref. HF1001 .B7

FINDING BOOKS, PERIODICAL ARTICLES, AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:

Books will probably not be as useful for researching a company as they would be if you were working on a general business topic or industry. Still you may find books published on well-known corporations such as MacDonald's of hamburger fame. Check in the card catalog under the company name. In addition, the Newcomen Society in North America publishes the Newcomen Addresses (AC5 .N55), a series of corporate histories which you might find useful.

Periodical articles are valuable if you need current and concise information. Articles on companies can be found by using a periodical index. In listing useful periodical articles, be sure to include the periodical title, volume, pages, and date, you will have to determine whether U.C. Libraries has the periodicals you need.

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